

67

OHYONNE - HISTORY

Legacy of 300 Years

Bayonne's History a Heritage of Hardship, Valor and Determination

By STEPHEN CHECK

The currents of American history have swirled about and influenced Bayonne since the time of the Pilgrims.

Dr. Walter F. Robinson, assistant superintendent of Bayonne Schools, shows the effects that developments of America had on the city in his "Historical Heritage of Bayonne." His history is the main section of the Bayonne Centennial Historical Revue, published this week.

DR. ROBINSON begins with the early Indian inhabitants of Bayonne.

"The Hackensack tribe of Indians once lived on our peninsula," he writes. "The Indian deed to Constable Hook was signed in 1664 by Oratamin, the chief of the Hackensacks. His domain included all of present Hudson County, Essex County and the southern part of Bergen County. "His main planting fields lay in the triangle between the Hack-

sack River, Overpeck Creek, and modern Route 4 (Ridgefield Park). His northern headquarters was a stockaded fort on a hill (in the present borough of Palisades Park) overlooking and defending these fields.

THE DELAWARE Indian helped our early Dutch settlers in many ways. He guided them over forest trails, many of which became roads. He taught them how to raise corn, beans and squash, and saved many a colonist from starvation.

"What happened to the Delawares? About 1690 the Delawares began moving westward into Pennsylvania. At a conference held at Easton in 1758 they gave Governor Bernard deeds for the last of their lands in New Jersey.

"A few moved to the first Indian reservation set up in America, here in the pine barrens of Burlington County. New Jersey built for these a whole community — homes, stores, a church,

a school and a mill. But they could not make a living here and left first for northern New York and then for the West.

"TODAY THE nearest Delawares are in Oklahoma or Canada."

A hundred years later, Dr. Robinson writes, Bayonne was in the center of British preparations to invade New York City.

"On April 22, 1775, a mud-spattered horseman from Boston galloped through the streets of New York City yelling the news about Lexington and Concord. On March 27, 1776 — almost a year later — the British evacuated Boston.

"WASHINGTON and his army hurried down to New York — knowing that the reinforced British would attack here. On June 29, 1776, the first of 400 British transports appeared at Sandy Hook.

"On July 4, 1776 (as the Declaration of Independence was being signed at Philadelphia), the first of 30,000 British troops were land-

ing on Staten Island. Our people at Constable Hook and Bergen Point could see bright British and Hessian uniforms moving over the hills of Staten Island and parading at Port Richmond.

"Their two shortest routes for invading New York City would be via Bergen Neck (now Bayonne) or via Brooklyn. The question was, Which? A British Guard was ferried across the Kill von Kull to Constable Hook and set up their two cannon near Van Buskirk's Lane to sweep the Hook Road (now 21st Street).

"This was the first British invasion of New Jersey."

THE CIVIL WAR had its effects on Bayonne, Dr. Robinson writes.

"On Monday (April 15, 1861) President Lincoln sent forth his call for 75,000 volunteers for three months (the limit set by militia law.) Under the state quotas set by the War Department, New Jer-

"In Bayonne the Close Light Guards signed up instantly — 70 strong. Our men formed Company E of the Second Regiment of the New Jersey Brigade. The company was under Captain John Van Buskirk, First Lieutenant Hiram Van Buskirk, and Ensign James Simonson.

"IN BALTIMORE ON April 21 and 22 a Southern mob had torn up railroad tracks and burned bridges leading to Washington. Thereafter no volunteers could get through Baltimore to Washington by rail.

"President Lincoln was pacing up and down the floors of the White House asking, Why don't they come?"

"But New Jersey worked out a surprising plan. Fortunately, on the Delaware and Raritan Canal many of the canal boats were steam driven. On May 3, the whole New Jersey Brigade embarked on 14 of these self-propelled barges at Trenton.

"THESE BOATS were able to carry our men down the Delaware River, then through a 14-

"By May 6 the entire New Jersey Brigade was in Washington — at first quartered in various public buildings and later camped on Meridian Hill. On May 7 the whole Brigade paraded to the White House and was reviewed by President Lincoln.

"New Jersey had sent the first full brigade to come to the defense of the Capitol and these were also the best equipped troops. Washington people could hardly believe that all of this group, the largest body of men to march in that city to date, came from 'Jersey'."

DR. ROBINSON explores all the governmental, cultural, industrial, and scientific developments in Bayonne. He traces slavery in Bayonne, and the shocks endured by immigrants who arrived in great numbers in the city in the late 18th and early 19th Centuries.

WRITING ON Bayonne's contributions to the nation's wars, Dr. Robinson says:

"Today finds Bayonne represented in all the armed services scattered all over the world, and their families in Bayonne anxious and prayerful — but steadfast and determined."



DR. WALTER F. ROBINSON

mile canal to Chesapeake Bay